GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:120
ANSWERED ON:01.12.2004
RURAL TELE DENSITY
Patil Shri Shriniwas Dadasaheb

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government is aware that rural tele-density has not been achieved as proposed in the Ninth Five Year Plan and is lagging far behind in the Tenth Five Year Plan; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by the Government to provide telephone services in rural areas?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD)

(a) Yes, Sir. One of the specific objectives envisaged for the Ninth Plan was to provide universal coverage or telephone on demand, in general. This has not been possible for the rural areas, in particular, mainly because of paucity of funds and operators perception of non-viability of rural telephony. However, the rural tele-density has increased from 0.41% in March, 1997 to 1.20% in March 2002. The tele-density in rural areas as on 30-9-2004 has reached a level of 1.66%.

(b) Rules have been framed under Indian Telegraph (Amendment) Act, 2003, for providing subsidy support by USO Fund for the growth of telecom facilities in rural areas. The Rules provide for the provision of Public and Information Services in the form of a Village Public Telephone in every revenue village as per Census 2001 and additional public telephone in every revenue village where population exceeds 2000. A non-lapsable Universal Obligation Fund has been created to support rural telephony. The fund is in operation since 01-04-2002.

Subsidy support is being provided from USO Fund for all (about 86 lakhs) rural house-hold Direct Exchange Lines (DELs) installed prior to 1-4-2002 as per rules. For the rural household DELs in net cost positive SDCAs installed after 1-4-2002, the procedures for inviting bids for providing subsidy support under the relevant Rules have already been initiated.